

LITERARY NOTES.

James Jeffrey Roche, the Editor of "The Boston Pilot," has written a volume to be included in the *Meditations*' valuable and interesting "Adventure Series." He has taken as his subject "The Pilgrimage of the Spanish Main."

The Rev. Haskett Smith, who was a disciple of Laurence Oliphant, and who is the present director of Oliphant's community at Haifa, has written a book about his master and his teachings. It is in the shape of a novel, the scene is laid in Palestine, and the title is "For God and Humanity: a Romance of Mount Carmel."

The mention of Laurence Oliphant reminds one to inquire if the publishers of Mrs. Oliphant's uncommonly attractive biography of that eccentric genius intend to issue a cheaper edition. The present price of the two volumes—several dollars—is prohibitive for many would-be readers. A less expensive edition would no doubt be welcomed by many people.

The American edition of "The Review of Reviews" has many claims to entertain and be entertained by the general reader. It is really an admirably condensed record of a month's history—one very convenient for reference; and its illustrations, mainly portraits, give it an interest beyond that of many similar publications.

Mr. Douglas Sladen's collection of verses, entitled "Younger American Poets," does not please our usually kind and complimentary friend, "The London Spectator." His critic declares that the collection has hardly a stanza or line to which it is possible to accord anything approaching genuine admiration, the only exceptions being a few dialect poems, including Mr. Bret Harte's "Heathen Chinee" and "Truthful James," and Colonel Hayne's "Little Beeches" and "Jim Bludos." Of these the critic says that he sincerely believes that they are as likely to last as anything produced by the poets of the present generation. He is "reluctantly forced to admit," however, that "the ordinary work of the 'Younger American Poets' is utterly without life. 'There is no nature, and there is no art.' All is emptiness and wind. When we say there is no art as well as no nature, we say so advisedly. We are perfectly willing to allow that in one sense there is plenty of art. That is, the language is harmonious and correct, the syntax excellent, the metres elegant. Again, defects of taste are seldom, if ever, apparent. Not a solipsism, not a vulgarity, not a barbarism is to be discovered. It is all faintly faultless, like a regular, splendid mill. That is, of art in the higher sense there is none at all. The art which renders Mr. Sladen's verse always interesting, which redeems even Mr. Frederick Niven's literary affectations, which saves Mr. Lang, Mr. Austin Dobson and Mr. Gosse, and keeps Mr. William Morris's epigrams from the waves of Lethe, is never apparent. If the minor American poets had more faults, it would be possible to find them more interesting. If they indulged in the wild imitations of other poets which are to be found, for example, in the verse of Lindsay Gordon, it would be a sort of relief. As it is, their verse is simply depressing. We feel as if the poets were somehow or other speaking with their mouths full of sawdust."

We leave the "Younger American Poets" to make their own comments upon this plain-speaking—perhaps they may consider the collection in fault—and continue to quote our English writer, now in a "more coming-on disposition":

The question why has American poetry, with the one exception we have named, so little value? Is it of no little interest to literature as a whole that the soil was not ready; but that is notoriously not the case. The prose of the present generation is quite as good in America as in England. Indeed, we are inclined to think it is better. In the expression of the prose now being written on the other side of the Atlantic is often more scholarship, and has a greater sense of distinction and of force and clearness, than on this side. The poems are not as good as the prose of the like period, which which injures American verse. Nor again, is it any lack of appreciation of poetry. Take it all in all, the American public is more appreciative in respect to good poetry than the English. And, though Mr. Tennyson, Mr. Browning, Mr. Keats, Mr. Shelley, and even Lord Tennyson, have had ten admirers in the United States for one in England, what, then, is the reason? We confess to being utterly unable even to suggest an answer.

Herbert Spencer's new work, "Justice," is on the point of publication. He considers this the most important division of his "Principles of Ethics" and has therefore executed it out of its form.

The success of last year in British fiction was Mr. Hall Caine's "Bomdan." Fifteen thousand copies were sold in less than twelve months.

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